



**PRESS RELEASE**  
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**For Immediate Release**

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**TAMPA WOMAN SIGNS PLEA AGREEMENT ADMITTING  
TO MISAPPROPRIATING CHARITABLE FUNDS**

Tampa, Florida - United States Attorney Paul I. Perez today announced the filing of an Information and signed plea agreement charging DEBBIE JEAN NIETO, a 43-year-old resident of Tampa, Florida, with eleven counts of bank fraud. The maximum penalties NIETO faces, if convicted on all counts, are thirty years' imprisonment and a fine of \$1 million.

According to the information and plea agreement, during her tenure as Executive Director of a local charity, Tampa Bay Reads, Inc., NIETO misappropriated thousands of dollars of charitable funds for her personal use. Court documents state that from June 1999 to January 2004, NIETO diverted funds from the charity's bank accounts at AmSouth Bank to pay for personal expenses such as rent and car insurance and to purchase personal items such as lingerie, jewelry, groceries, clothing, and housewares. Related documents filed in the case indicate that the government intends to prove that NIETO misappropriated more than \$200,000 from the charity's bank accounts.

The case was investigated by United States Secret Service and will be prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney Cherie L. Krigsman.